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## Local Organizations Seek Tech Donations for #ConnectedCommunity Project @ STRATFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY

Stratford, ON, May 20, 2020 - The Stratford Public Library (SPL) believes that everyone in our community should have access to online resources with the opportunity to connect, engage and learn. This is especially true during the current COVID-19 health crisis when people are asked to practice physical distancing, self-isolation and quarantine.

The Stratford Public Library plays a pivotal role in providing the public with the Internet. In 2019, the computers at the Library were accessed over 25,000 times. Julia Merritt, CEO at Stratford Public Library, states that “the ability to connect and access information is more important than ever.” Merritt emphasizes that “the Library is committed to continuing to facilitate the Stratford community’s access to internet services.”

Due to the current crisis and the temporary closure of the Library’s physical location, many local residents no longer have access to the Internet and are unable to afford the required equipment and services. To resolve this problem, SPL has joined with the United Way Perth-Huron, Rhyzome Networks, the Local Community Food Centre, and GOTECH to create the #ConnectedCommunity initiative.

The #ConnectedCommunity initiative seeks to provide internet connectivity during the COVID-19 crisis by having community members donate their unused web-enabled devices (laptops/tablets/phones) to local residents. The devices will be connected to free WiFi for a 3-month period provided by Rhyzome Networks/Festival Hydro, and Library support and resources will be made available. Those interested in donating a device are to contact the United Way Perth Huron at (519) 271-7730 to register. Donated devices will be wiped clean of data and cleaned by GOTECH, and then redistributed to people needing a device by the Local Community Food Centre. Those with a device that cannot afford internet connectivity as well as individuals requiring a device are asked to contact the Stratford Public Library at 519-271-0220 x115 to register their interest.

The partner organizations would like to thank the community in advance for their generous donation of devices.

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If you would like more information about this topic contact Jennifer Draper, Public Services Librarian at 519-271-0220 x146 or [jdraper@stratford.ca](mailto:jdraper@stratford.ca).

